

Blood of Pangea

Narrative Role-Playing in the Pulp Tradition

by

James & Robyn George



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Electronic Edition

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As always to Robyn, who
was dissapointed with the genre's
lack of elves, but still had
great ideas about how it should work!

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With many thanks to the
great writers of the pulp tradition,
including both Howard and
Lovecraft, who imagined entire
worlds no less human for all the magic
and monsters that dwelt within...

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INTRODUCTION

Sword and sorcery remains a popular genre and has been since its inception in the 1930s. But this has undergone many changes in almost a century despite being one of the oldest of the "modern" fantasy styles, again, in testament to its enduring charm...

Blood of Pangea is sword and sorcery role-playing with some modern innovations. For instance, the rules are extremely simple and depend largely on narrative elements for character creation and general gameplay, including the ways of magic and sorcery, although none of this is new or even particularly modern.

Conceived in another time, sword and sorcery was a rugged literary genre, one born in the yellowed pages of cheap (and tawdry by the standard of the day) pulp magazines. Here the violent, and even sensual, thrills were devoured by what might be called the first generation of modern fantasy fans, and the attraction continues!

So, just what is this sword and sorcery anyway?

To begin with, the genre imagined a world - our world - but in its ancient and myth-shadowed past, where sorcery lived and monsters were ever-presently real. This was usually some lost continent with many prehistoric holdouts from Earth's distant past alongside doomed and exotic civilizations in the style of Atlantis or sunken Lemuria.

It was only just the 1930s, after all, and 19th century sensibilities persisted, including its lingering ideas about lost worlds at a time when geology was revealing wonders...

Furthermore, sword and sorcery was a gritty, realistic genre despite being populated with magic and monsters. Gone were the elves and fairies of high fantasy, replaced with ruggedly human characters having all of the same weaknesses. These were passionate, lusty barbarians, frequently amoral, although still heroic in their way.

And despite some confusion on this point, the genre was not exactly medieval, imagining something closer to antiquity, with fabulous temples to the many elder gods. A time when lurking tribals hid in steaming jungles housing priceless gems and danger!

Magic (sorcery) figured prominently in these stories, although often approached with suspicion by the protagonists; warriors who preferred to trust in cold steel over spells. Sorcery was vaguely evil, even when practiced by good characters, underscoring the solidly humanistic element of the genre. Sword and sorcery was, ultimately, about people.

Once again, Blood of Pangea is a fantasy role-playing game in the rousing spirit of its pulp origins; a game of barbarians and wandering heroes exploring an untamed continent.

HOW TO PLAY

One person is the JUDGE. They prepare an adventure, usually some location to explore and survive, complete with enemies to fight, puzzles to solve, and various supporting (non-player) characters for them to interact with. This is done well in advance to ensure a more immersive gameplay experience without any interruptions.

Everyone else is a PLAYER (1-5 are best), each one creating their own fantasy character and working together as an adventuring party, combining their skills to survive. Play is not competitive, and there is no winner or loser. This applies to the judge as well, who must remain fair and impartial when moderating events.

During play, the judge describes what is happening, and the players react, working together to overcome challenging situations, like hungry monsters or deadly traps, etc. The rules are then consulted and dice rolled to determine the outcome in critical situations, whether killing the monster or performing an extraordinary feat.

Each new game picks up where the last one left off as part of a continuing CAMPAIGN. If the characters survive, they will gain valuable experience and get better at what they do, improving and/or adding abilities; perhaps a new language or knowledge of some ancient culture in whatever world the judge imagines.

Of course, sometimes characters will die. In these situations, the player simply creates a new one and rejoins their companions.

DICE AND MINIATURES

Play requires six-sided dice (called a d6), and when the rules say to roll two dice, this is written as 2d6...

Lead miniatures (25/28 mm) can be used to represent characters and monsters in the game. For scale, 1 inch equals 10' on the table, whether using a ruler and/or by sight if everyone agrees, noting here that figures can be painted to the player's liking, although their use remains completely optional, if highly encouraged.

Finally, the most important rule in role-playing is that the judge is completely free to add or change anything to suit the needs of their own fantasy campaign - these rules are just a guide to get started!

I. BARBARIANS

Player characters are unquestionably central to the game, and this section explains how to make them. Readers familiar with classic sword and sorcery know it as a literary genre and, accordingly, this game takes a narrative approach to character creation specifically (and play in general) as per the following rules...

FIGHTING MEN

Characters are fighting men and women, sword and sorcery being a ruggedly human genre, who can fight and attempt any actions open to an able-bodied adult. This makes the choice of armor and/or weaponry essential to their general success and emphasizes decision-making over complex rules and special abilities.

THE NARRATIVE

Of course, characters will have other, more specialized skills, and this must be included in their written NARRATIVE.

Using 30 words or less, the player describes their character's name, gender, and anything else, like being an acrobat or experienced hunter and tracker, etc. Except where noted, these are limited to realistic skills and should include some personal history:

ABILITY	NOTES
Exceptional trait	speed or physical strength, etc.
Craft/skill	either self-taught or trained
Specialized knowledge	history, science, and/or the occult

Note here that while anyone can attempt feats of speed or strength, exceptional types will find doing so easier, noting that characters are limited to a maximum of two such traits.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Obviously, magic is well-represented in sword and sorcery, and characters can become SORCERERS by making some mention of it in their written narrative. This is subject to additional rules and imposes restrictions on the use of armor and weaponry.

As a general rule, statements like "Gundigar can do anything" are strictly prohibited. Each skill and ability must be separately provided by the player as part of a coherent narrative. Indeed, the judge must take care to enforce this rule, lest tricky players exploit the narrative aspect of the game to make inferior, one-dimensional characters!

Most characters in sword and sorcery are barbarians and thieves, although exceptions exist. Indeed, many supposed "barbarians" are more honorable than their civilized counterparts!

CHARACTER CLASS

In general, those characters who shun magic in favor of battle and physical pursuits are called ADVENTURERS, while any possessing magical knowledge are SORCERERS. This distinction, called CLASS, limits what armor and weaponry is available and defines the character's approach to play in general, per the following:

CLASS	ARMOR/SHIELD	WEAPONRY
Adventurer	yes	any
Sorcerer	no	one-handed
Thief/corsair	no (special)*	any

*Stealth not allowed while wearing armor

Note here that THIEVES are simply adventurers who forego armor to perform acts of stealth, whether climbing, sneaking, or pilfering small objects, like the purse of some foppish nobleman...

MIGHT (AND MAGIC)

All characters begin the game with 10 points of MIGHT; a measure of survivability and cunning. This can be "spent" in one of several ways, based on conditions and/or class chosen:

First, any character can use 1 MIGHT surviving a single "hit" suffered in combat or from traps and natural hazards, etc.

ADVENTURERS can likewise spend 1 MIGHT adding +1 to any attack or physical action, rolling first and deciding whether or not they actually wish to do so (a tactical choice).

SORCERERS use MIGHT to work powerful spells, noting that this is extremely draining. Alternately, judges can allow MIGHT to be spent on intellectual or knowledge-based actions per the above.

RECUPERATION

Should MIGHT fall to zero or less, whether in combat or from other physical trauma, death results. Otherwise, falling to zero is not fatal unless the victim is subsequently hit, noting here that armor and/or shields sometimes help. That said, spent MIGHT is recovered through rest, preferably in a secure place, like a great and wicked city...



MONEY AND EQUIPMENT

For game purposes, silver pieces (SP) are the basic unit of exchange, although gold coins (GP) are also found. Unfortunately, newer characters tend to poor, having only 3d6 SP to start and every possible reason to search for more in dark and deadly places...

Fantasy worlds are overflowing with coin, and ambitious judges can introduce copper pieces (CP), although silver will always be the monetary standard when making major purchases:

COINAGE	VALUE
Copper pieces (CP)	10 CP = 1 SP
Silver pieces (SP)	10 SP = 1 GP

In addition to any starting money, all characters begin having the clothes on their back, rations (food and water) enough for one full week, and a single weapon of the player's choice. Armor and any additional items must be purchased separately per the following:

ITEM	COST (SP)	NOTES
Common/small	1d6	personal items, tools
Exotic/large	1d6 x 10	armor, weaponry
Rare/very large	1d6 x 100	luxuries, mounts, vehicles

Note that cost varies greatly by location and availability, although judges can impose specific costs consistent with their setting and/or the situation at hand, with bartering allowed!

ARMOR AND SHIELD

For simplicity, ARMOR worn protects the wearer by allowing them to ignore up to 3 hits from any single attack, after which the armor becomes useless until repaired or replaced. SHIELDS resist up to 2 hits, with repair costs varying greatly per the following:

TYPE	MINOR DAMAGE	MAJOR TRAUMA*
Armor	10 SP	15 SP
Shield	5 SP	10 SP

*Applies to normally fatal attacks

Players can decide when to use their armor and may employ shields separately or together for better defense, the latter being subject to the judge's approval. Note also that armor captured or found on adventures has only a 1 in 1d6 chance of being useable, especially when stolen from previously slain enemies, subject to conditions and the judge.

The protection granted by armor comes at a heavy price, restricting movement to 30' (without respect to type) and making acts of stealth, like sneaking and stealing, impossible. Accordingly, armor is not only an important part of customization, but also an effective strategy; choosing direct confrontation over stealth and speed.

WEAPONRY

Characters can fight and employ a wide variety of weapons, whether simple clubs or swords, that, unlike armor (and shield), may be captured completely intact and fully useable:

WEAPON	RANGE	NOTES
Bows	200'	crossbows, long/short bows*
Melee:	--	axes, maces, swords, etc.
One-handed	10'	enables shield use, no bonus
Two-handed	10'	no shield, deals +1 damage#
Thrown melee	30-50'	includes daggers, spears, etc.

*Judges can enforce a minimum range of 30'

#Requires at least 20' free space to wield properly

Once again, class restricts certain weapon choices and, in general, adventurers are better warriors for it. Sorcerers sacrifice the use of better weaponry, but make up for this with the use of powerful spells which, although limited, are nonetheless effective.

ENCUMBRANCE AND SPEED

Characters can wear armor (per class) and bear up to 10 items small enough to hang from a belt or fit in a backpack, including shields and other weaponry, etc. Furthermore, they may hold up to 1,000 coins of whatever denomination (no restrictions on jewelry), moving 50' per round unarmored or with shield alone and 30' armored in combat.



THIEVERY

All characters can attempt acts of stealth, like climbing, hiding, or sneaking, etc. Indeed, some become thieves and reject armor to exploit the benefits of speed and guile. In this respect, thieves are a fluid class, and certain famous barbarians move freely between armored combat and stealthy exploits as necessity dictates.

To better protect the integrity of thieves as a distinctive class, the judge can deny stealthy acts to sorcerers, although any described as fast should still enjoy some benefits...

Everything about this game is designed to ensure that the character's concept and, indeed, success, depends more upon the choices of the player and less upon special powers and abilities. And while sorcerers enjoy magical abilities, these are designed to emphasize a player's imagination over hard and fast rules, making them fun to play!

LANGUAGES KNOWN

For simplicity, all characters read and write the same (common) tongue, although others can be learned with training.

A MODEL BARBARIAN

The following is a new character (a thief/corsair) ready for their very first adventure exploring vast Pangea:

NAME: Aja' GENDER: female

CLASS: thief MIGHT: 10

NARRATIVE: Aja' was a tribal girl taken by raiders and trained in the arts of navigation, sailing, and general piracy. She speaks Nemian and is a great leader...

EQUIPMENT: backpack, bedroll, dirk, picks and tools, rations

EXPERIENCE: 0 TREASURE: 3 SP

In the above example, the player had to consult the judge to determine what additional languages were available. If she survives, Aja' will doubtless learn more and master new skills and abilities with experience, noting that while adventuring is hard, its rewards are great...

II. GAMEPLAY

Throughout the game, players (and their characters) will attempt many different actions, like fighting or navigating obstacles, etc. These are resolved by rolling 2d6 on the following:

ACTION IS...	REQUIRES	TARGET IS...
Simple	no roll	prone/unconscious
Challenging	7 or better	novice combatant
Daunting	9 or better	skilled/trained fighter*
Overwhelming	12+	monster or demon, etc.

*Includes player characters in most cases

Some actions are easy and available to everyone, and common sense is usually enough to decide. Anything else, like being a blacksmith, requires some mention in the character's written narrative, although the judge will always have the final say.

Difficulty is likewise determined by the judge, noting that under the right circumstances, even the simplest act can be difficult, if not impossible, to successfully carry out. For instance, climbing when bound with heavy chains. Such is the stuff of heroes...

ACTION	DIFFICULTY
Attempt craft/skill	varies
Climb sheer walls	overwhelming
Detect lies or deceit	daunting
Force (pick) locks	daunting
Hide from mortal foes	challenging
Pass by undetected	daunting
Pick up enemy trail	challenging
Recall knowledge	varies
Scale massive trees	challenging
Smash open stuck doors	challenging
Swim strong current	daunting
Topple marble pillars	overwhelming

Of course, the above is just a guide, and the judge will doubtless modify this as befits the character and/or conditions.

MORTAL COMBAT

Combat is resolved in much the same way. Characters are normally daunting (9 or better) to hit, with all others challenging or overwhelming as decided by the judge. Sorcerous foes can be especially difficult to overcome and may require cleverness as well as great strength!



TIME AND DISTANCE

Out of combat, time passes at whatever rate the scenario requires, for instance, a three-day journey through the desert might only take several minutes assuming nothing interesting happens!

Combat, on the other hand, is divided into roughly 1 minute rounds, during which characters can move and attack if within range at the end of that movement, subject to the following:

INITIATIVE

At the start of hostilities, each side rolls 1d6 to determine order of movement (one player rolls for the party and the judge for those enemies armed and ready). The highest result acts first each round, noting that stalemates and ties go to the enemy side in most cases.

DEALING DAMAGE

Characters move 50' per round (30' armored) and may attack if within range at the end of that movement. Otherwise, attacks are resolved with the above-listed rules. Weapon damage follows here:

RESULT	DAMAGE*	NOTES
2-6	0	Miss; possibly glancing off armor
7-11	1	Bodily hit; varies by difficulty
12+	2	Critical, possibly heroic, mortal blow

*Large (two-handed) weapons add +1 damage

Once again, the probability of hitting a target varies greatly with difficulty as decided by the judge. Armor and shield allow the wearer to ignore damage, making this a good choice for anyone going into close combat with enemies, some of which are terrifying indeed...

INJURY AND DEATH

Any successful attack deals 1 hit of damage to the target, although certain weapons (and/or enemies) add bonuses. Damage is subtracted from the victim's current MIGHT, and should this fall to zero or less, death results barring the use of armor, etc.

Note that any result of 12 indicates a critical strike for 2 hits, double damage, plus, where applicable, any bonuses.

A SAMPLE COMBAT

The following is a sample combat:

Aja¹ is exploring some jungle ruins when she is attacked by a wild tribesman. Since hostilities are looming, both sides roll for initiative per the above rules. The player rolls 3 and the judge 5, meaning her attacker goes first each round until defeated...

The savage is only 20' away and, being unarmored, leaps and easily covers this distance, thrusting with his spear and rolling 9, striking the barbarian for 1 (+1) hits. This is subtracted from her total MIGHT, and she survives with 8 remaining.

Now it is Aja's turn to act. Being already engaged, movement is unnecessary, and she attacks with her dirk, getting 10 and scoring 1 hit against the challenging (7+) tribesman. The savage was only a common scout having 1 MIGHT and dies by the character's hand.

REST AND RECOVERY

Each day of full rest recovers 1d6 MIGHT, although the judge can rule otherwise in extreme cases, and these are many, noting here that there is no magic capable of healing wounds. Characters are heroic figures and capable of shrugging off incredible harm!

NATURAL HAZARDS

Many hazards await the unwary, some natural and others manmade, like ancient crypts; tempting, but equipped with deadly traps to slay any would-be trespassers. And as this describes most adventuring characters, special efforts should be made to challenge them...

Falling deals 1d6 hits per 20' dropped. Likewise, any characters who cannot swim will suffer 1 hit per round until rescued or otherwise pulled from the water, keeping in mind that adventurers are heroic and highly resistant to extreme punishment. Even so, death is everywhere.

Poison, whether natural or ingested (or placed on weaponry and/or needles in traps) deals 1-3d6 hits per attack and is fatal in some cases, being rightly feared. Furthermore, various mechanical traps may be encountered, to include the following types:

TYPE	INJURY	NOTES
Bear trap	1d6	victim held for 1d6+1 rounds
Covered pit	by distance	spikes add an additional +1d6
Poisoned needle	1-3d6	found in locks and similar things
Projectile	1-3d6	machine-launched spears, etc.
Swinging blade	by number	deals 1d6 hits per blade present

When setting any trap, the judge should have a good idea of how it operates and what actions will trigger it. This includes stone pressure plates or hidden wires, etc. That said, vigilance and good planning should eliminate the worse of these.

Depending on the circumstances, the judge can allow players to raise up shields against some traps, like thrown spears, etc.

USING MIGHT

Once again, regular adventurers can spend 1 MIGHT adding +1 to any attack or physical action, and sorcerers use it casting spells as explained below. Note here that any character reduced to less than zero doing so is not dead unless subsequently injured, either in combat or through some trap or natural hazard, etc.

THE DARK ARTS

Barbarians are a superstitious lot and mistrustful of sorcery and everything that goes with it. Even so, it can be useful, and characters may be allowed to become sorcerers provided they declare it in their narratives first. Magic is very draining on the user and requires them to spend MIGHT as per the magic and sorcery rules:

First, each spell cast expends 1 MIGHT, possibly more, and affects a single target within a 60' radius, including the sorcerer, although this can be extended to include multiple targets if it makes sense and the judge otherwise permits. The latter costs +1 MIGHT per additional target to be affected, subject to range requirements.

Furthermore, spells cannot permanently damage or destroy, although targets can be delayed or distracted for 1d6+1 rounds. Otherwise, magic can duplicate normal tasks, navigate obstacles, and recall knowledge, subject to these rules and the judge. Where applicable, maximum movement is 50', noting here that spell casting takes one full round...

Finally, except where noted, spell effects last only as long as the sorcerer concentrates. Any strenuous activity, like fighting, casting additional spells, or attempting any other action difficult enough to require dice negates the effect. Under no circumstances will any spell last more than one game hour as per the judge.

HIGH SORCERY

Optionally, sorcerers (and always for non-player types) can inflict magical injury at a rate of 1 hit per point of MIGHT spent to a maximum range of 30', this being true sorcery.

COUNTER-SPILLS

Any sorcerer targeted by enemy spells may counter them by spending twice their cost in MIGHT, although such magic is exhausting to the user and attempted only under the direst of conditions.

MAGIC AT WORK

Aja' and Petronius, a sorcerer, are exploring some ruins when they encounter a giant reptilian horror. The characters take initiative and, not wishing to press their luck, Petronius summons billowing smoke to impede it, spending 1 MIGHT. He then rolls 1d6+1 and gets 4, the number of rounds the creature will be distracted.

Later, being unable to shake off the monster, the pair is cornered and the sorcerer attempts another spell, this time levitating to a small fissure open to the sky. He spends 1 MIGHT (+1 for Aja'), and both of them rise to safety, although doing so drains 2 MIGHT and leaves Petronius dangerously drained should he later be attacked.

Once again, players are free to imagine any spell effect they wish, whether raising an invisible force wall or turning into a bird to ascend some yawning chasm, subject to the magic and sorcery rules!



EXPERIENCE

As characters go on adventures, they gain valuable experience and improve, both in skill and general survivability, this being measured in experience points (EXP) acquired as follows:

THE CHARACTER...	EXP
Goes on an adventure	1 (base)
Performs extraordinarily	+1
Completes a quest, etc.	+2

Experience points can be saved and subsequently spent improving the character as per the following, noting that MIGHT is not the only path to power, but is nonetheless important.

ADVANCEMENTS

First, players can spend 7 EXP to gain +1 MIGHT. This is not only the obvious choice, but a strategically sound one, as doing so increases physical toughness and/or spell casting ability when playing a sorcerer, although, once again, there are other ways to grow...

Yet another way to improve is by learning another language, the specifics being left to the judge. This happens over time and requires access to a trainer, perhaps in the party:

COST	FLUENCY
1	Basic, some words known
2	Discussion possible
3	Excellent, fully fluent, etc.

Note here that communication is very important and the role-playing opportunities great. That said, judges should incorporate this into their games and reward players clever enough to use it.

Finally, characters might spend EXP to master a new skill, perhaps becoming a blacksmith, etc. Cost here is left to the judge and the nature of the skill or trade to be learned:

SKILL IS...	COST	NOTES
Menial	1-3	physical training, etc.
Skilled trade	3-5	also, specialized knowledge

The narrative focus of this game extends beyond character creation to sorcery and even gameplay, and this is in keeping with its literary inspiration and style. To this end, judges are free to add and/or change anything here as befits the needs of their own campaign...

III. CAMPAIGNING

Sword and sorcery was traditionally set in a fictional past, perhaps before the fall of Atlantis, where magic still worked and monsters ruled forgotten places. This choice is left to the judge, who can choose from several mythical places or make their own:

ATLANTIS figures prominently in many tales, including some from the sword and sorcery tradition. This doomed continent was situated in what is now the Atlantic Ocean, but with colonies extending into Europe and the New World. Atlantis was thought to be fairly recent and probably too civilized to support a savage genre.

HYPERBOREA was supposedly located at the top of the world, but was otherwise pleasant and warm. It was said to be ruled by giant kings, and at least one modern portrayal added prehistoric life and a mysterious technology, joining civilization with the primitive.

LEMURIA reportedly occupied much of the Southern Indian Ocean and supported any number of primeval races. An ancient land, it most likely housed prehistoric life. There is also some suggestion of magic being used, with priests communicating through time.

MU is the oldest of all, being thought to exist some 50,000 years ago, although still home to an advanced civilization that raised great cities with many colonies. Situated in the Pacific Ocean, Mu had theoretical connections to the Maya and may have supported prehistoric life, making this a good fit with sword and sorcery!

PANGAEA is alone here in having been an actual place; a prehistoric supercontinent from the late Paleozoic and early Mesozoic, the great age of the dinosaurs. It would be easy for creative judges to flesh out a vanished human race having ancient sorcery and living side-by-side with all manner of prehistoric beasts and, possibly, gods...

The judge can use any combination of the above, even Atlantis, with whatever additions or changes they wish. After all, the legends might be completely wrong! That said, judges can imagine an original setting inspired by their favorite books and/or movies.

TONGUES SPOKEN

Obviously, many languages will be spoken, and this element of play ensures challenge, fun, and role-playing opportunities as well as making character advancement relevant. As a rule, the judge should introduce several (2-3) regional languages and various primitive tongues, although all characters will know the common speech of travelers.

NON-PLAYERS

During a game, players will encounter many supporting characters, referred to as non-players, whether friend or foe, and these generally fall into any one of the following types:

TYPE	MIGHT	NOTES*
Minion/thug	1-3	tribesmen or robbers, etc.
Commoner	4-9	farmers and tradesmen
Hero/villain	10+	important campaign figures

*Actions/movement based on armor worn (if any)

MINIONS are rank and file enemies having less MIGHT, although still dangerous in large numbers. These are easily and heroically dispatched to ensure faster-paced encounters.

COMMONERS include various townsfolk; no tougher than minions, but generally more inclined to use MIGHT when fighting or performing other physical acts, so beware the torch-waving mob!

HEROES AND VILLAINS are competent adventurers and will possess all the same powers and abilities as the (player) characters.

For simplicity, the judge need not write a full narrative for either minions or commoners. More important characters, however, must always be described to reflect their power, etc.

SAVAGE BEASTS

Characters will, of course, encounter various animals, including any of the following common varieties:

TYPE	MIGHT	MOVE	DAMAGE/BONUS*
Bear/ursine	10	30'	bite, 2 claws (+2)
Big cat	8	50'	bite, 2 claws (+1)
Boar/hog	6	40'	charge, gore (+0)
Crocodilian	9	30'	bite, drown (+1)
Elephant	18	50'	charge, crush (+3)
Rhinoceros	15	40'	charge, gore (+2)
Serpent	5	20'	bite, poison (+0)
Wolf/canine	7	50'	bite, 2 claws (+1)

*Can be split between multiple targets

Animals and monsters roll one attack and may split damage between multiple targets within range, with drowning or poison calculated last...

MEN AND MOUNTS

Eventually, characters may wish to obtain (or steal) mounts, whether simple pack mules or war horses bred for battle, selected for toughness and/or strong backs per the following:

TYPE	MIGHT	MOVE	NOTES*
Pack mule	5	20'	bears 5 items/1,000 SP
Riding horse	7	30'	carries 10 objects/5,000 SP
War horse	10	50'	as riding; may be armored

*Mounts may carry oversized objects, per the judge

Note that some animals can use MIGHT to improve attacks, much like the characters if the judge permits.

NAMELESS HORRORS

Foul beasts lurk in the darkest corners of the world, and these may sometimes be encountered. Sword and sorcery traditionally treats these as singular abominations as opposed to having a formal list, although judges are free to write their own. This makes each monster terrifying because players have no idea what they face!

Creating monsters involves the following simple steps, noting that the judge is given total freedom:

First, the judge should decide the monster's appearance and method of locomotion, whether flying or swimming, to include their movement speed and number of attacks, etc. Note here that things like the ability to breathe underwater are implied for aquatic/marine types if a written narrative is not otherwise provided or prepared...

Next, difficulty (chance to hit) and damage bonus (or attacks) should be decided as befits its size and power, etc.

Finally, total MIGHT should be determined, once again, based on any number of things, including the number and strength of any characters otherwise meant to face them. Again, a full narrative is not needed, although recommended for any monsters making a repeated appearance in the judge's particular game setting.

Like animals, some monsters can employ poison, and many are cunning enough to use MIGHT to improve their attacks. Some things, born of sorcery, employ magic and possess terrible power, making them dangerous to even the strongest parties. These are normally demons or even dark gods long-forgotten, but still worshipped by deranged cultists.





Note here that monster narratives can exceed 30 words if the judge requires, and that these might invoke special rules to reflect whatever unique powers the creature so possesses.

MAPPING ADVENTURES

Judges can employ graph paper to map interior areas, with 1 square equaling 10'. This is important when tracking movement and/or range in combat situations, but also because larger (two-handed) weapons require greater space to wield (usually, 20').

Important areas should then be numbered and separate notes written describing important people, places, and things to include any relevant statistics and/or treasure as explained later.

Outside and wilderness areas should also be mapped, whether using the same graph paper or special hexagonal sheets, noting that scale will vary based on the judge's needs. For instance, 1 square equals 120' on local adventures and 100 miles mapping whole continents!

TRAVELLING

The world is vast, and curious players will almost certainly wish to explore and seek their fortunes. For game purposes, characters going on foot cover 10 miles per day, and those fortunate enough to have mounts travel 30, assuming time to take rest, etc.

PLANNING THE ADVENTURE

Characters seek riches and will follow any tips (provided by the clever judge) to the dark towers of decadent noblemen and wicked sorcerers, perhaps tempted by the thought of some gem, etc. These are always guarded by terrible servants and traps, and the judge should carefully map this well in advance to ensure a smoother gameplay experience...

The following are possible adventure ideas:

ASSASSINATION is usually an evil act, but one still available to the characters, although perhaps the intended target deserves death, having done some terrible wrong. In these situations, the characters will be approached by some agent of the potential employer, and the players must role-play the terms of any bargain.

EXPLORATION likely accounts for most adventures, whether to satisfy curiosity or lust for riches (probably both). Once again, the judge should plant some tempting rumor of the place, like the crypt of a legendary sorcerer buried with gold, noting that the location need not be indoors or underground and that monsters are common.

RESCUE AND RECOVERY missions are generally more wholesome, although patrons can have hidden motives. Rescuing prisoners might involve breaching a prison and/or defeating its guardians, as does recovering a desired object, noting that sorcerers might enlist parties to take back some artifact or magical ingredient, etc.

WEALTH AND RICHES

Treasure can take the form of coins (usually silver) or gems and/or jewelry of equal value. These should be carefully placed so as to justify the player's effort while giving them incentive to search for more in keeping with the finest traditions of the genre...

ARTIFACTS AND RELICS

Despite their popularity in fantasy games, magical items are not plentiful in sword and sorcery and not found here, although exceptions can always be made. Traditionally, these are strange objects having awesome power, like a black gem capable of raising an evil god, although this is just the sort of thing great adventures are made of!



APPENDIX I: PANGEA

While judges are highly encouraged to create their own setting, the following kingdoms and peoples might be casually inserted or embraced completely and expanded upon...

KINGDOMS OF PANGEA

BAROOMA lies to the east, beyond the great deserts, but accessible to whatever trade routes there may be. Their culture is roughly analogous to Persia of antiquity and having similar architecture and medicine, among other things. It is renowned for its silk and spices, but also for its sorcery, being extraordinarily advanced.

NEMIA is an ancient equatorial land ruling the south that carved an empire out of steaming jungles. This most closely resembles a merging of the Egyptian and Mayan cultures at their height, staying in power through military might. Nemian gemstones and slaves are traded far and wide, the latter taken on many raids.

OSTOGOTH represents a region more than anything else, being mostly comprised of small (and ever-changing) kingdoms organized around prior tribal entities. These are based loosely on the Goths and/or Germanic barbarians of antiquity, having a great reputation as warriors, but also as farmers and merchants when they choose to settle.

PUUN was once a great empire, having long-since fallen to invaders coming from the east. These settled down only to become absorbed by the older culture, forming a new and different race. Puun is a decadent state, combining the treacherous politics of Imperial Rome with the skill and riding abilities of the Huns.

SAR-JAN lies well to the east, beyond Barooma and even the endless grasslands that birthed oldest Tartaria. Modeled after Imperial China, its trade goods (silk and jade) are far more numerous in the western kingdoms than its people, although the latter will sometimes be met while trading or acting as envoys to Barooma and Puun.

TARTARIA stretches across a veritable ocean of steppe grassland, an endless flat expanse. Here live extraordinary horsemen; some of which invaded ancient Puun and changed. These are much like the Mongols, fearsome warriors and free, although intelligent and honorable if their trust is earned, perhaps by skill at arms.

Barbarians wander, and characters may hail from the above-listed regions if the judge otherwise permits. Note also that each has a unique language that can be spoken (and learned) in the campaign...

Baroomian scholars also speak of a strange island continent, the unexplored KHUL-DUR. The judge can populate this with primitive beasts or perhaps an advanced civilization, etc.

MONSTERS OF PANGEA

While most monsters will be nameless abominations, the following creatures are occasional threats and might be introduced as characters explore their world. Note here that some have additional rules, with difficulty determined by the judge:

TYPE	MIGHT	MOVE	DAMAGE/BONUS#
Ape-man	1-10	40'	2 claws, weaponry (+1)
Great ape	15	30'	bite, trampling (+2)
Jinn	varies*	50'	chilling, illusions (+0)
Kraken	30	20'	capsize, tentacles (+3)
Manes	5-10	40'	sorcery, weaponry (+2)
Mastodon	20	30'	trample, 2 tusks (+3)
Pterodactyl	1-5	40'	2 claws, sharp beak (+1)
Snake-man	varies*	varies*	poison, weaponry (+0)
Troglodyte	1-5	50'	2 claws, weaponry (+0)
Tyrannosaur	25	30	bite, 2 great claws (+3)
Wizard	varies*	50'	demons, sorcery (+0)
Ymir (giant)	10-20	varies*	2 claws, weaponry (+3)

*By training, armor worn, or weapon used, etc.

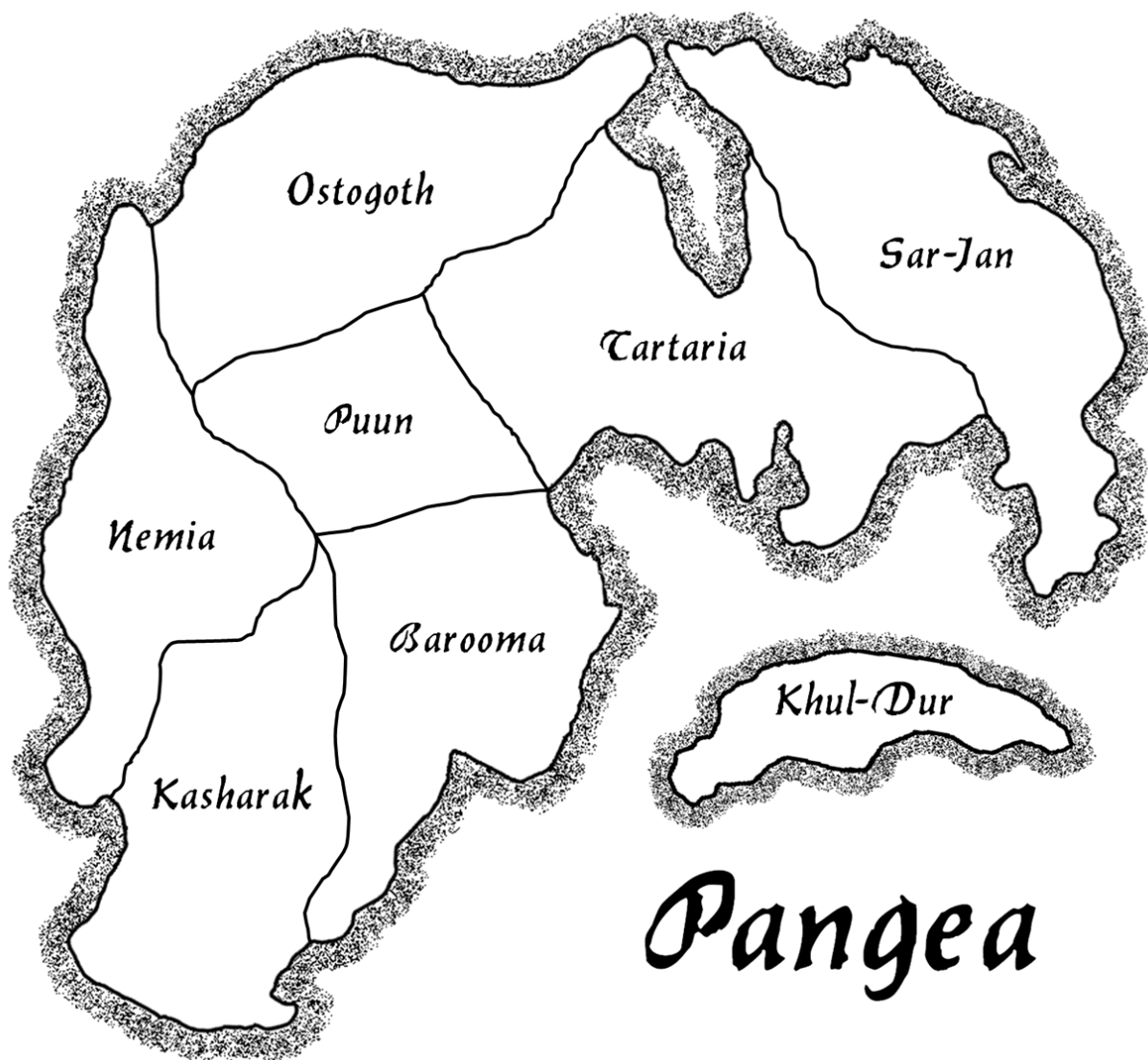
#Two-handed weapons (where employed) add +1 damage

APE-MEN are a simian humanoid race from the jungles of Nemia who rarely leave their home except when raiding for food and/or sacrifices to their mysterious gods. They fight with natural weaponry, but also employ clubs, being physically quite powerful.

GREAT APES stand a massive 12' tall and possess strength beyond the mightiest human. They are rare, but sometimes seen in the jungles south of Nemia, called KASHARAK or forbidden.

JINN stalk the lonely Baroomian Wastes, where certain fakirs and sorcerers claim to summon them. These whirlwind demons attack with a chilling touch and are capable of using sorcery to distract and/or otherwise lead victims astray in the desert, although they are seemingly incapable of producing any other magical effect.

KRAKEN are aggressive squid-like monsters that attack boats and drag victims overboard. For simplicity, any attack roll of 12 or better indicates success and drowning unless helped. Another tactic is to turn the boat over by inflicting 10 "hits" to the vessel (daunting).



MANES include any undead spirit, whether a harmless ghost or one inhabiting its mortal remains. The latter include lumbering corpses guarding a tomb or powerful undead sorcerers having all the magic possessed in life, using spells and/or weaponry, noting here that these are frequently overpowering (12 or better).

MASTODONS are cold-adapted elephants, larger and physically strong, although just as intelligent. They move in herds and become dangerous when threatened, attacking with their tusks and/or trampling their unfortunate victims. Mighty creatures, they roam the tundra north of both Ostogoth and endless Tartaria.

PTERODACTYLS (flying reptiles) hunt in the Nemian jungles, feeding mainly on horses and/or livestock, although aggressive ones may attack characters when hungry, etc. Optionally, larger ones may carry off smaller victims (children or female) on a roll of 12 or more, attacking with both their pointed beaks and razor-sharp talons.

SNAKE-MEN occupy temples in the Nemian jungles and sometimes, the treacherous Baroomian Wastes. They appear humanoid, but with serpent heads and a poisonous bite (usually, 1d6), although preferring to use conventional weaponry when raiding for slaves and sacrificial victims for their gods. Their sorcerers are legendary.

TROGLODYTES appear as squat (5' tall) and primitive men, sometimes peaceful, although still dangerous when threatened or their territory entered uninvited. While not as strong as ape-men, they are smart, defending their caves with traps and ambushing enemies with primitive arms, typically axes and/or thrown spears.

TYRANNOSAURS are found in forgotten Nemian jungles such that few encounter them. Chief among the dinosaurs, they are very aggressive hunters and without fear, attacking with their clawed feet and jaws, pinning their prey and then tearing them apart. Their sheer physical might exceeds that of any known predator moving on land.

WIZARDS rarely visit the mortal realm. These are very powerful sorcerers more likely known by reputation than any actual meeting, although this can change. Arrogant and scheming, they watch man suspiciously, being able to cast one spell per round and summon demons without draining their vigor (MIGHT) when doing so.

YMIR (frost giants) live in the cold mountains of Ostogoth, being a dreadful monster race. They stand 12' tall and possess strength double that of an ordinary man, pummeling with massive fists and wielding immense weapons too big for any human (even a strong one) to ever lift, appearing as pale-skinned humanoids wearing primitive furs.

APPENDIX II: GODS AND DEMONS

Non-player sorcerers will sometimes conjure up demons from Hell, spending 1d6 MIGHT doing so. This foul deed takes a full round and is only possible once per combat encounter:

TYPE	MIGHT	MOVE	DAMAGE/BONUS
Horned devil	10	40'	2 claws, weaponry (+1/2)
Elder one	5-10	30'	fear, pseudopods/tendrils (+3)
Winged horror	5-10	50'	2 claws, taloned feet (+1)

HORNED DEVILS are humanoid and sometimes (1-4 in 1d6) appear bearing two-handed weapons of hellish make.

ELDER ONES appear as formless monsters so terrible to behold that characters seeing them have a 1 in 1d6 chance per round of fleeing in terror, although 1 MIGHT can be spent avoiding this.

WINGED HORRORS are flying devils that prefer claws to weapons, being also impervious to arrows and other missiles.

GODS OF PANGEA

Many gods are worshipped in Pangea, and many adventurers have sworn frantic oaths to the following deities:

DEITY	REGION*	NOTES
Bejula	P	goddess of healing and fate
Beyla	O	earth mother and wife to Othun
Esteres	B	teacher of secrets and magic
Hadur	P/T	god of iron and the earth below
Indra	B/P	bringer of storms and ruin
Mazada	B	ascended god of wisdom and law
Nanet	N	dark mother; goddess of sorcery
Opheria	B/P	goddess of dreams and opiates
Othun	O	sky god and keeper of the slain
Padura	P/T	horse mother; consort to Hadur
Set-Amon	N	serpent king of the underworld
Shekesh	N	judge of the dead; soul eater
Thoror	O	storm lord and slayer of demons
Umbra	T	weather god; devious trickster
Zathura	B/P	maker of arrows; god of hunters

*Barooma (B), Nemia (N), Ostogoth (O), Puun (P), Tartaria (T)

Note here that the gods of Sar-Jan are thought too distant to be listed, although judges can certainly add them. This is just a start!



Some writers in the pulp tradition added monstrous and alien gods, collaborating worlds and imagining cosmic horrors spanning the whole of human history. These were dark tales, antithetical to the hopeful and generally heroic nature of sword and sorcery, and the judge must decide for themselves how to use them, if at all:

NAME	NOTES
Azoth	swirling mass from deep space
Ilzzur	gargantuan reptilian devil
Ktuul	aquatic and rubbery high priest
Tiltaki	formless (amoeba-like) monster
Undrikal	black and faceless humanoid giant
Yengi	white worm and larval travesty

These are the SIX BLACK NAMES, although the judge is always free to include others. Alien things of terrifying aspect, simply looking upon one risks a powerful madness lasting 1d6+1 game days unless an equal amount of MIGHT is spent, noting that vulnerable characters may succumb to some insanity per the following:

2d6	MADNESS	NOTES
2-6	None present	no insanity manifest
7-9	Catatonic state	simple movement (10") only
10-11	Delusional	hallucinations possible*
12	Frenzied and raving	violence under great stress#

*Assume a 1-2 in 1d6 chance several times a day

#May attack companions (1-3 in 1d6) as per the judge

Unless MIGHT is spent resisting madness, the judge rolls secretly to establish insanity (if any), noting that it normally takes up to one game day for any symptoms to manifest. The judge may, at their discretion, take over when irrational behavior occurs, like experiencing terrifying hallucinations or turning on their luckless companions, etc...

